

BOOK REVIEWS

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Low molecular weight heparin therapy: an evaluation of clinical trials evidence

Monique Sarret, Andre Kher, Francis Toulemonde; New York; 1999; Marcel Dekker; 474 pages; \$165.00.

The book *Low Molecular Weight Heparin Therapy* provides a unique reference for the serious student of anticoagulant therapy. The editors and authors have provided a text in which the major studies in particular topics have been summarized one by one, and then expert commentary has been given at the end of each section. This commentary summarizes the opinion of the experts on the material discussed and their own personal biases concerning the topic of interest. The commentators are international experts in the field of coagulation biology. In almost all instances, the commentary includes not only discussions about low molecular weight heparin (LMWH) therapy but also anticoagulant therapy in general. One of the strengths of this book is its ability, through its commentaries, to put into proper perspective not only what is known, but importantly, what is still unknown concerning LMWH.

As appropriate for such a book, more than two thirds of the work is concerned with venous thromboembolism prophylaxis and treatment, the most widely studied areas of LMWH. The book opens with a description of the marketed LMWHs and follows with a discussion of chemical and biological properties of various LMWH preparations and their mode of action. I found this discussion very informative, and it reinforced the concept that the anti-Xa activity for each individual LMWH is of limited use in judging the pharmacologic properties of the drug. The various LMWH preparations must be evaluated on their own merits and should not be considered one and the same drug.

The two longest sections follow: the first is on prophylaxis of venous thromboembolism, and the second is on the treatment of venous thromboembolism. Commentaries, which are particularly informative, include those concerning orthopedic surgery and trauma venous thrombosis prophylaxis, and the discussion on the "International Consensus Statement" for venous thromboembolism prophylaxis is an excellent overview on the current state of the art. The treatment aspects associated with the use of LMWH are well covered, and the commentaries provide not only a summary of the most up-to-date knowledge about LMWH, but also guidelines for necessary future studies.

The remainder of the book covers topics less well known, from anti-Xa monitoring to the use of LMWH in indications such as arterial thrombosis, including vascular and coronary indications, pregnancy, and pediatrics. Other topics include the decreased incidence of osteoporosis with LMWH compared with standard unfractionated heparin, the decreased incidence of heparin-induced thrombocytopenia with LMWH, and the ability for LMWH to be reversed by protamine sulfate. The book ends with a dis-

cussion of meta-analyses that have evaluated LMWH (although throughout the book, meta-analyses are downplayed because of the differences in various LMWH preparations) and a look to the future. A scholarly description of the present position of LMWH in various clinical syndromes and the drugs that are likely to challenge LMWH in the future for these syndromes concludes.

This is an unusual book that combines aspects of a reference guide and a forum for discussion by experts in the world concerning a wide variety of topics for which LMWH has been advocated. This is not a book in which a busy clinician will easily find a "cookbook" approach to the use and dosages of LMWH. However, it is clearly a must for those clinician scientists who wish to examine the data from which recommendations for the use of LMWH have been derived and who wish to have international experts discuss the data from their own unique perspectives.

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Management of acute stroke

Ashfaq Shuaib, Larry Goldstein; New York; 1999; Marcel Dekker; 541 pages; \$175.00.

Management of Acute Stroke, edited by Ashfaq Shuaib and Larry Goldstein, provides a critical review of current stroke evaluation methods and treatment studies. Unlike other recently produced texts on stroke management, it emphasizes broad treatment strategies rather than the management of specific disease processes. The relatively short chapters and frequent use of tables help to make it a very readable textbook.

The first half of the book addresses prehospital and hospital evaluation of the patient with acute stroke and includes a chapter each on the common causes of stroke in children, young adults, and elderly adults. Certain chapters in this section, especially the laboratory investigations in acute stroke, provide concise, practical information. Those chapters reviewing the causes of stroke in different age groups are packed with lists and, perhaps because so few chapters are allocated for these subjects, provide a more superficial treatment of each topic. Although included in this section, the chapter examining the pathophysiology of ischemic brain damage provides an excellent preview of the treatment section and fits better in the second half of the book.

The strongest chapters of this book are those evaluating the myriad stroke treatment trials encompassing stroke prevention, acute treatment, and rehabilitation, which are found in the second half of the book. The chapters discussing